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UNCLAS HARARE 002324

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: "DAILY NEWS" COMMISSIONS NEW PRINTING PRESS

1. Twenty months after its presses were destroyed by expertly placed, sophisticated explosive devices (no arrests were ever made) the independent "Daily News" inaugurated new presses. In an October 22 ceremony attended by Zimbabwean media, human rights, law and business leaders, "Daily News" senior management thanked its supporters and spoke of the challenges the paper has overcome and still faces. The planned highlight of the evening, pushing the button to start printing the next day's edition, did not take place because a strike by "Daily News" workers delayed the paper's production.
2. The perseverance of "Daily News" management and staff after the bombing is a remarkable story. Printing, collating (often by hand) and distributing the paper since the January 28, 2001 destruction of the original presses required daily creativity and chutzpah. Remarkably, the "Daily News" never missed a day, although late delivery and poor print quality were chronic problems. The new press, surrounded by impressive looking security walls, lights and cameras, is capable of quick and high-quality production. One of the challenges for the "Daily News" now is to find additional business for the press so that it will produce revenue during the 20 hours per day when it is not printing the newspaper.
3. The "Daily News" also faces a continuing problem with distribution. Ruling party supporters, including the so-called "war vets," have banned the paper in most small towns and extensive parts of rural Zimbabwe. Copies of the newspaper are seized and burned in places like Rusape, Mutoko and Murewa. The "Daily News" aims to be a national newspaper, and has the editorial and production capacity to do so, but only if Zimbabwe's rulers relax their prohibition on the independent media outside of the country's main cities and larger towns.

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